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Add OER
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CIA No 4836
19 July 1967

S-2378

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mrs. Evelyn Colbert
Chief, Southeast Asia Division INR
Department of State

SUBJECT: VC/NVA Base Areas in Cambodia

OER has prepared the attached draft of the Base Area portion of a memorandum for USIB regarding VC/NVA use of Cambodian territory. Base areas in this case include areas used by the VC/NVA forces to take refuge for extended periods, to support the infiltration route, to direct operations in South Vietnam, and to conduct cross border operations. This section on Base Areas discusses the bases, first, by using only the information obtained from captured VC/NVA documents and from interrogations of VC/NVA prisoners and returnees and, secondly, by using information obtained from photography [REDACTED]. The information was divided in this manner with the understanding that the first part may be more useful.

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[REDACTED] The second part could probably be cleared for presentation to selected governments.

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[REDACTED]
Chief, Trade and Services Division

Attachment: a/s

Distribution: (S-2378)

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EVIDENCE OF VC/NVA BASE AREAS IN CAMBODIA

Evidence from Captured Documents and Interrogations

Captured documents and interrogation reports reveal in a very convincing way that the VC/NVA forces have been using base areas in Cambodia and that they plan to continue to do so. The bases are used to take refuge for extended periods of time, to support the infiltration route, to direct and support operations in South Vietnam, and to conduct cross border operations. The bases vary in size and configuration, depending on their use and on the section of the border in which they are located. Some bases consist of regimental size, permanent-type complexes with command, logistics, medical, and defensive facilities. These bases are usually established and operated covertly, although local Cambodian authorities sometimes give their active support and approval.

Captured documents, obtained in the Tay Ninh area during the past two years, discuss mainly VC/NVA use of Cambodian territory adjacent to Tay Ninh Province. Interrogations of prisoners, most

[redacted] describe bases in Cambodian territory adjacent to those provinces. Sufficient indications are available from other areas, however, to indicate that Communist bases have not been limited to the areas mentioned above.

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Listed below in chronological order is information from captured documents that reveals in the clearest terms how the Communists have been using Cambodian territory.

--Minutes of a VC meeting held on 8 April 1966 to discuss taking refuge on Cambodian soil relate that, after re-viewing the situation, it was unanimously agreed that

- a) when the VC need help, local Cambodian chiefs readily provided assistance and show cooperation in setting up living and messing facilities on a long term basis;
- b) VC security while on Cambodian soil was inadequate (i.e., air and artillery shelters were too visible and were not dug in the same pattern as those of the Cambodians; quarters were not camouflaged; smoke from cooking could be seen; paths were too exposed and could easily be detected); c) the Cambodians feared that secrecy had not been preserved and that the Allies would attack them. The Cambodians were also responsible for their acts to higher echelons; d) taking refuge on Cambodian soil was necessary because the percentage of sick and wounded in base areas in South Vietnam was very high. 1/*

--Letter dated July 1966 to the chief of Chi Fu Circum-scription Office, Svay Rieng Province, Cambodia, from the

* See Appendix A for source list.

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Commander in Chief, Border Defense Corps, NFLSVN Liberation Army, requested that he come to Ba Thu, Svay Rieng Province, to discuss with representatives of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NFLSVN) and the Liberation Army problems concerning frontier security. To maintain security and to prevent Allied terrorist attempts, it was preferable for him to be escorted. 2/

--Report on the Activities of C. 66 Party Committee during July and August 1966, related that a) after VC units took refuge in Cambodia in April 1966, some units (i.e., the entire agency [redacted] the rear services element headed by Ba Te, and the element [redacted]

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[redacted] did not return to Vietnamese territory; b) one supply element of the political department, which previously was stationed at Lo Go, was bivouacked in Cambodian territory; c) the number of people who intended to move to Cambodia or who were preparing for their evacuation to Cambodian territory was increasing; d) in Cambodia VC agencies illegally cleared many trails and roads leading to riversides and forests. 3/

--Minutes of a Frontier Inter-Province Meeting held on 26 November 1966 at Duc Hue District (Hau Nghia Province, South Vietnam) stated that Cambodian authorities and post commanders had not had any problems with South Vietnamese refugees. The former told the civilian population to build

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air raid shelters. Some Vietnamese had settled down temporarily at the border and were not willing to return. 4
--Undated document captured in Tay Ninh Province about March 1967 entitled "Regulations Concerning the Border" stated two regulations on quartering, messing, and construction of bases as follows:

"1. It is absolutely forbidden to all agencies, military units, branches, and schools performing operations in the border area to build their base on Cambodian territory, with the exception of the convalescence camps which accommodate a large number of wounded and sick patients. In the latter case, construction of such camps will be subject to approval by the Border Action Section."

"2. Those units or agencies which have been permitted by the Border Action Section to build their bases across the border should comply with the regulations, i.e. They should select a well concealed location as the site for the camp, and they should not cut the trees."

Also included in the document were measures to avoid enemy sweeps operations, one of which reads as follows:

"Upon being ordered to go back to our side of

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the border, we should, prior to our departure, erase all traces, such as places to hang up the hammocks, plastic sheets for our tents, bottles, milk cans, etc.,. We should pay particular attention to destroying the smallest piece of paper bearing Vietnamese letters. We should also carefully conceal the shelters and water wells which might be of use to us in the subsequent escapes to safety." 5/*

--Report No. 61/BC of Supply Group 80A, dated 1966 (day and month not specified) captured in Tay Ninh Province 30 March 1967 stated that Group 80A requested that it be issued from 20,000 to 31,000 Cambodian Riels for use in case of evacuation during Allied Sweep Operations. 6/

--Notebooks captured in northern Tay Ninh Province in March 1967 described in detail the VC construction of a 40-kilometer road, 11 kilometers of which were on Cambodian territory, to connect the Cambodian road network in Mondulkiri Province, Cambodia, with Route 14 and the waterways in Phuoc Long Province, South Vietnam. The road was built by NVA Engineer Battalion 611, beginning in February 1966. The whole road was built to support truck traffic, with the objective of transporting rice and medical supplies from

* This document also states, due to poor security and discipline by some VC units near Lo Go, the Cambodian authorities made them leave.

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Cambodia to Phuoc Long for the Central Committee for South Vietnam (COSVN) Rear Service Group 86. 7/

--A notebook captured on 21 December 1966 revealed that a political-military school for VC Military Region II was located in Cambodia in the vicinity of Ba Thu, Svay Rieng Province. The school taught instructors of combat training for the provincial main force and local units. The trainees were instructed to treat the Cambodian people, officers, and soldiers with equality in order to gain their support for the VC. 8/

--Document captured 31 March 1967 in Tay Ninh Province reveals that rice was being shipped from South Vietnam to Cambodian territory by one of the COSVN rear service units in order to prevent its capture by Allied operations. 9/

25X1X Numerous returnees and prisoners captured during the past two years by Allied actions [redacted] have reported on VC/NVA facilities and defensive positions in the South Vietnamese border area of Ratanakiri Province. Recent testimony has further identified this area as the headquarters of the B-3 front which directs the Communist campaign in the western highlands of South Vietnam. In most cases the interrogees have very few details and only general impressions as to their whereabouts, but following is the more precise and detailed information obtained by interrogation.

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[REDACTED] stated that he arrived in South

25X1X Vietnam in October 1965 and his unit was based in Cambodia near Sinh Village No. 2 [REDACTED] While there his unit was supplied with rice that appeared to be Cambodian and was brought from a station located 15 kilometers north of the village. Subsequently wounded in the Chu Ba battle in Pleiku in late May 1966, he was evacuated to the Le Loi Divisional Hospital via a medical rest station (located in a square bounded on the north [REDACTED]

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25X1A [REDACTED] where they rested for three days. The group of wounded then walked south for five days, crossing the Tonle San and Route 19, to the divisional hospital located south of the Ia Drang River (probably in the vicinity [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]
about 6 kilometers from the Ia Drang River [REDACTED] in October 1965 and in June 1966, he learned the hospital had been in existence since 1964 to supplement the Le Loi Divisional Hospital. [REDACTED] also stated that the hospital could care for about 400 patients at the time he was there.

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In March 1966, source's battalion was ordered to move into Cambodia to move rice from one storage area in Cambodia

[REDACTED] to other supply areas closer to the South

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25X1A Vietnamese border [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Each storage area was

guarded by three or four armed personnel and was located in a forested area. Each area consisted of two or three small rice storehouses, containing 6 or 7 tons each, and nearby buildings for other types of food. 11/

25X1X

[REDACTED]

Cambodian border and reunited in the forest in CAMBODIA, in order to reorganize the unit and to treat the wounded.

In September 1966, after reorganization and recuperation, K.1 and K.2 Combat Battalions of the 95th Regiment moved back into South Vietnam to participate in dry season operations and K.3 Battalion, now formed of old and sick soldiers, remained in Cambodia. 12/

* More detailed interrogation of this soldier is included above.

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[REDACTED] said that after the VC defeat in the battle of YA BO in August 1966, he was sent to attend a two-week re-orientation course for cadres from platoon leader level up. The course was held in Cambodia at Front B3 and lasted from 20 August to 5 September 1966. During conversations with Front B3 cadre, source learned that the Western Highland region was Front B3's area of activity. Front B3 was responsible for drawing up battle plans, for commanding the VC units located in VIETNAM's Western Highland provinces, and for holding frequent reorientation and training courses for subordinate VC units. Source did not know the exact location of Front B3's Command Section. He did know, however, that almost all Front B3 installations were situated in Cambodian territory. A barracks [REDACTED] was located close to the building in which source took his reorientation work. The complex was situated in a sparse bamboo forest and included five wooden buildings. One of these was equipped with poles and antennas on the roof. The barracks was surrounded by communication trenches and tree hedges. A guard station, staffed by an armed platoon, was set up on the path leading to the barracks.

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[REDACTED] source's regiment withdrew to

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Cambodia to wait the replacement of casualties. He decided to rally, and [REDACTED] he walked alone along

25X1X

Route 19 to the first Cambodian post. The Cambodian soldiers permitted him to continue without questioning. An hour later, he came to the second post. Source, upon being questioned, told the Cambodian soldiers that he was going to Saigon. He had heard when he was with his unit that Cambodian soldiers were always sympathetic toward liberation troops and willingly guided them in the direction they must go, either to Hanoi or to Saigon. The Cambodian soldiers gave him some rice and chicken and sent a soldier to guide him to the frontier. 13/

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Evidence from Photography [REDACTED] of Base Areas

Analysis of aerial photography of the Cambodian border area adjacent to South Vietnam confirms in some cases and provides additional information on the base areas identified in the previous section of this report. In addition, photography reveals possible or probable insurgency activity in many additional areas along the border. It is not possible to determine for certain that the activity in many of these additional areas is part of a VC/NVA base area by correlating the information received from photography with

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information received from other sources. In two major areas, however - western Ratanakiri Province and southwestern Mondulkiri Province -- it is possible to detect in photography and support from intelligence derived from other sources that major portions of the activities result from VC/NVA use.

Western Ratanakiri

Western Ratanakiri Province from the area of the Tonle San (Se San in South Vietnam) south across Route 19 to the Prek Drang Valley (Ia Drang in South Vietnam) appears to be the most extensive area in Cambodia being used as a VC/NVA base. This base is centered in South Vietnam but extends into a strip of Cambodia territory about 5 to 10 miles in width and 25 miles in length. This portion of the base in Cambodia forms part of the logistical system for acquisition and storage of supplies. It also provides facilities in Cambodia for sanctuary, hospitalization, rest, and training.

Development of this area into a major VC base is revealed by aerial photography. In November 1965 during the Chu Pong mountain battle that raged throughout the Ia Drang Valley in South Vietnam, photographic analysis of adjoining areas in Cambodia, particularly, the Prek Drang Valley, revealed photographic evidence of numerous well used trails crisscrossing the border areas generally from one remote heavily wooded area to another equally remote area. Defensive positions including heavy anti-aircraft machine guns and

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foxholes were identified on aerial photography in the vicinity of [REDACTED] and well inside Cambodia to a maximum of about 5 miles.

A detailed search of photography of Ratanakiri Province as far west as the administrative capital of Lomphat revealed only scant evidence of partially concealed, thatched buildings in November 1965. By late 1966, however, comparative photography left little doubt that Communist forces were utilizing the sanctuary of Cambodia on a more permanent basis. Numerous thatched buildings with associated trails, defense positions, and row crop agriculture had appeared in widely dispersed areas throughout the area adjacent to the border. At least 50 areas of probable Communist activity near the border have been identified by the National Photographic

Intelligence Center (NPIC) to date. The Cambodian road network has

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been extended to the banks of the Tonle San and water transshipment areas have been built. Also, within this area are at least two Cambodian border defense posts. The extent of complicity by local Cambodian officials in this area cannot be documented, however.

[REDACTED] describe in detail some of the base facilities revealed in photography and mentioned by interrogates. Following is the type of information available [REDACTED]

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--Sources stated an NVA base camp was located on Chi Cham mountain [REDACTED] It consisted of 6 large thatched huts, each 10 meters by 10 meters, surrounded by 30 smaller huts each 5 meters by 8 meters. In the center of the camp, source observed 4 metal antennas mounted on the tops of trees. The antennas had wires leading to 4 of the huts. Source was invited to enter the camp because he gave wine and chicken to the soldiers. He described the heavy weapons in the camp and said there were 1,000 NVA soldiers and 500 Montagnard VC in the camp. 14/

--On 14 December source observed a VC/NVA training post [REDACTED] The post served as a training site for an unidentified VC/NVA force of 600 men who had recently arrived at the site. A field kitchen was located about 30 meters south of the post. Three huts were located 50 meters south of the post. Each hut measured

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10 meters long and four meters wide. 15/

Southeastern Mondulkiri

Another major base is situated in Cambodia at Mt. Nam Lyr 80 miles south of the Prek Drang Valley. The base area extends from the South Vietnamese border some 15 miles west in the vicinity of feeder roads extending from the southern portion of Route 141. North Vietnamese and Viet Cong support activity, reported since early 1966, has become particularly pronounced since the beginning of 1967. Photography has revealed a high concentration of insurgent facilities adjacent to and at the terminus of motorable access roads [redacted] comparable to Communist activity in the Lactian Panhandle.

The major supporting vehicular artery in the area is a circular unnumbered road about 35 miles in length connecting Route 14 and Route 141. At least thirty of the identified probable insurgent facilities in the area are located adjacent to two access roads which extend from the unnumbered road toward the South Vietnam border. Both the unnumbered road and the access roads exhibit evidence of frequent vehicular activity. Four encampments have been identified immediately south of the Nam Lyr mountain area.

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[redacted] Communist use of this

area are summarized as follows:

--On February 4, 1967, a convoy of 15 Cambodian GMC trucks

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carried 200 sacks of rice (100 kg. each, total of 22 tons),
60 sacks of dried fish, and 20 tins of fish sauce from
Camp Le Rolland to Buon Muor [REDACTED] At that point
the supplies were loaded on elephants and carried to a
VC supply base [REDACTED] 16/ 25X1A

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[REDACTED] reported that a large
VC staging area was located at Mt. Nam Lyr near [REDACTED] 25X1A
about 3 km west of the Vietnamese border. As many as
6,000 VC and NVA troops were bivouacked in the area in
early 1967.

--According to a July 14, 1966 report, a VC camp consisting
of 10 thatched huts, each measuring 6 x 45 meters, was
situated [REDACTED] It was supplied from Camp Le Rolland
[REDACTED] and Buon Y Miar Klang
(unlocated). Supplies were carried on elephants to the
camp. 17/

25X1A

25X1A

--According to a February 1967 report, two VC platoons were
located at Buon Bo Dra [REDACTED] 18/ 25X1A

--A Communist headquarters is located in a cave about 3 km.
southwest of Kav Khle [REDACTED] Units were operating
in this area for two years. 19/ 25X1A

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